

"New hope for the treatment of liver diseases"

Louvain-le-Neuve (Belgium) June 2009 – Promethera Biosciences, a new company active in the field of regenerative medicine for the treatment of liver diseases was created in February 2009 and recently appointed a new Chief Executive Officer, Eric Halioua, to perform capital increase and develop the company.

**Promethera® Biosciences** mission is to discover, develop and commercialize cell therapy products to treat liver diseases in an innovative way, using allogenic stem cells from healthy human livers. Promethera Biosciences aims at bringing to the market a unique cell therapy product, to treat severe diseases of the liver affecting children and adult. The company's cell therapy product (**Promethera® HepaStem**) is based on a newly discovered and patented progenitor cell type: Human Adult Liver Derived Mesenchymal Stem Cells (hALDMSC).

The same cell line will be used for the development of a cell model use by pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry in discovery and pre-clinical departments for *in vitro* testing of new drugs and lead compound optimization (**Promethera® HepaScreen**). The adult liver progenitor cell, developed as the Promethera® HepaStem product, is a complete biological system, which can be applied to cure a wide variety of liver diseases, from rare in-born metabolic diseases (orphan diseases), to larger acquired liver deficiencies such as liver fibrosis or fulminant hepatitis.

The company is a spin-off from the Université Catholique de Louvain and more precisely from the Laboratory of Pediatric Hepatology and Cell Therapy directed by Professor Etienne Sokal. The very high level of translational research performed in this academic unit led to an international patent application in 2005 and now, to a biotech company creation for which both Sopartec, the University Tech-Transfer company and Professor Etienne Sokal are shareholders. The appointment of a highly talented CEO will stimulate growth and innovation within the very young company.

**Eric Halioua** was principal of the international life sciences practice of Arthur D. Little based in Paris and Boston during the last 12 years, he has led and conducted work in the areas of strategy, M&A and technology & innovation management for biotechnology, pharmaceutical and medical devices companies. Eric also worked as a strategic marketing manager for the "Centre Européen de Bioprospective" and as project leader in the corporate R&D centre of Zeneca in UK.

Eric is co-founder of two biotechnology companies called Myosix and Murigenetics. Myosix is a tissue engineering company specializing in musculoskeletal cells culture used in the regeneration of the heart muscle. The company has been bought by Genzyme mid-2002 and

financed the phase 2 of clinical trial. Murigenetics is a Biotechnology company developing therapies for genetic disorders.

Eric was also a Board Member of a French public biotechnology company called Vivalis, which specializes in the production of avian stem cells lines for the production of vaccines and recombinant proteins. Eric holds two master degrees (DEA and Magistère) in Pharmacology and Molecular Biology and a Graduate from ESSEC business school, with an advanced degree from the Health Care ESSEC chair.

The two shareholders of Promethera Biosciences are Sopartec SA and founder Professor Etienne Sokal.

**Etienne Sokal** is a pediatrician specialized in gastroenterology with 20 years experience in the field of pediatric hepatology and liver transplantation. He has taken an active part in the pediatric liver transplantation program, under the direction of Prof JB Otte, a world pioneer in pediatric liver transplantation, since this program was launched at Saint-Luc Clinics in the eighties. So far, more than 700 children have been transplanted and many foreign clinicians have also been trained in the field at Saint Luc Hospital. Pr Sokal is also the leader of a research team actively working on liver associated metabolic diseases in children with an extensive know-how in pediatric hepatology, infectious immunology, oncology and hepatic transplantation. The team is also specialized in *in vitro* manipulation of hepatic cells (culture, cryopreservation or cellular metabolism). More than 200 peer-reviewed publications demonstrate the level of excellence of the team, which is internationally recognized. The recent breakthrough in liver stem cell technology has also positioned the team within the leaders in the field. Beside clinical activities and laboratory research, the center has also conducted numerous pharmacological clinical researches thanks to a well-organized pediatric orientated clinical investigation center.

Sopartec S.A., the major shareholder of Promethera is a fully owned subsidiary of the Université catholique de Louvain, working with ADRE to facilitate the transfer of technologies created at UCL for the benefit of society, the economy, the inventors and the University